

Congressional Record Statement by U.S. Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34)
January 4, 2005
Honoring Hon. Robert T. Matsui

Mr. Speaker:

This week our nation has lost a great leader and statesman from my home state of California, Bob Matsui. And it is with a great deal of sadness that I join my colleagues to pay tribute to Bob's life and his distinguished record of service and accomplishments during his 26 years as a member of the House of Representatives. A model of integrity and commitment to his district, his state and our nation, Bob exemplified the best of this great institution.

By having the privilege of representing an area of Los Angeles with a rich and diverse Asian-American population that includes Little Tokyo, Koreatown, Filipinotown and Chinatown, I am very aware of the positive impact Bob had on the Asian-Pacific-Islander community and the Japanese-American community in particular. Like so many Japanese-Americans, Bob's early years were spent with his family in an internment camp during World War II. Anyone viewing the large photo of a youthful Bob Matsui with his little league baseball teammates which adorns his office wall was reminded of the difficult challenge an Asian-American faced growing up in 1950's California. As a young man in that volatile ethnic environment, Bob Matsui was a stand-out student who gained admittance to the University of California at Berkeley and distinguished himself academically both there and at the Hastings College of Law.

His early experience became the foundation of his academic success as a young man, and ultimately led him to a career of distinguished public service, first for his local Sacramento City Council, then to this great House. His respect for this institution and his personal and professional integrity were well-known and helped Bob become a persuasive advocate on the issues he cared deeply about.

As a member of the Energy and Water Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, I was honored to work with him on one of the most important issues to California – water. Bob's knowledge of water issues affecting our entire state, including southern California, and his long record of support for adequate flood control protection for the Sacramento area were brought to bear each year during our committee deliberations as we set priorities for funding the water projects so crucial to Sacramento and to California.

Bob was also a strong advocate of trade and of protecting the rights of our senior citizens. In fact, as the ranking Democrat on the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security, Bob was our Democratic expert and a leading advocate for the protection of this critical program. Bob was to be our Democratic point person for the upcoming and pivotal debate on Social Security. Understanding the importance of Social Security to our nation's seniors and the need for the Democratic Party to effectively and successfully confront attacks on the system, his wife Doris told me that Bob continued to plan a Democratic strategy to the very end at Bethesda Naval Hospital.

It was this kind of commitment coupled with his integrity and sincerity that helped to make Bob one of the most respected members of Congress. This

respect also made him one of the most successful chairmen of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. We all know that the DCCC set many records during the 2003-2004 election cycle. I believe this success stemmed from the leadership model that Bob conveyed at the DCCC's helm, and it was also a result of the great esteem in which Bob was held by all segments of our party. I was proud to serve with him as vice-chair of the DCCC, and Bob made sure it was indeed a working position. Few members could have motivated me in quite the same way as Bob Matsui.

In short, I will miss Bob as a friend and colleague. This House, the Democratic Party and our nation have lost a great statesman and a quiet and effective leader. His legacy of accomplishments as a trail-blazing Asian-American Californian is unlikely to be surpassed. His dedication, dignity and bipartisan approach to addressing the nation's problems will be the hallmark of his legacy for both Republicans and Democrats.

In this time of extreme partisanship and frequent legislative gridlock, it is my hope that we can all learn from the example of our friend and colleague, Bob Matsui.

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